



{In Archive} Fw: Paper mill accused of polluting Arkansas river

Philip Crocker to: drown

Bcc: Matt Hubner

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From: Philip Crocker/R6/USEPA/US

To: drown@adeq.state.ar.us

Bcc: Matt Hubner/R6/USEPA/US

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Hi Steve,

Wanted to share this article, which you may have already seen. Any updates on the work proposed by your agency and Georgia-Pacific to address our concerns related to Coffee Creek/Mossy Lake?

Thanks,

Phil

March 15, 2011 7:34 PM http://www.cbsnews.com/8301-31727_162-20043531-10391695.html

Koch Industries accused of polluting waterway

by Chris Zawistowski, CBS News investigates intern

A Koch Industries paper mill is violating the Clean Water Act by pumping out massive amounts of pollution into an Arkansas waterway, according to an EPA enforcement [complaint to be filed tomorrow](#) by Public Employees for Environmental Responsibility ([PEER](#)) and the Ouachita Riverkeeper.

The complaint alleges that a [Georgia-Pacific paper mill](#) on the Coffee Creek in Arkansas - owned by the billionaire Koch Brothers - emits 45 million gallons of paper mill waste including hazardous materials like ammonia, chloride, and mercury each day

Coffee Creek then flows into Louisiana's Ouachita River where the pollutants have left the formerly pristine water speckled with odorous foam, slime and black pockets of water, said Jerry Johnson, who has been visiting the Ouachita River for 35 years.

"People used to swim in it," said Johnson, who now lives along the river. "In the summertime, it was the place to go."

But Johnson said the number of visitors has dwindled as the river conditions continued to grow worse, preventing the area from reaching its full economic potential as a vacation destination. The pollution is so bad it has kept Johnson from fishing in the river.

"If I did fish out of it, I don't know if I would eat it," Johnson said.

Barry Sulkin, a field office director for PEER, said Georgia-Pacific is blatantly breaking a section of the

[Clean Water Act](#) that prohibits the discharge of "distinctly visible solids, scum or foam of a persistent nature."

Though the pollution problem with Coffee Creek started years ago, the issue was compounded by the state's refusal to correct water quality standards in 2010, said Sulkin, a former chief of environmental enforcement for the Tennessee Division of Water Pollution Control.

Environmental groups lobbied for stronger environmental standards but in September, the state issued the Georgia-Pacific mill a permit.

"It's obvious to me that the state is allowing this to continue for apparent economic reasons," Sulkin said.

Georgia-Pacific said in a statement that the water has been repeatedly analyzed by the EPA and the Arkansas and Louisiana regulatory agencies.

"We are in compliance with all water permits issued by these agencies, most recently, our updated water discharge permit, which was issued in 2010," Georgia-Pacific said in the statement.

"For decades, Georgia-Pacific has been a very active environmental steward in Ashley County and surrounding areas in Arkansas and Louisiana," the statement added. "Our employees live in this community and we are committed to operating a facility that is environmentally sound. We have a long-term interest in the Ouachita River's quality and habitat."

An EPA spokesperson for the South Central Regional Office said he could not comment on this specific complaint but said "we will review them and respond as appropriate."

Regardless of the outcome with the EPA, Cheryl Slavant, the designated Riverkeeper for the Ouachita River, said she knows the damage to the waterway can still be easily repaired.

"All the corporation has to do is spend some money-a lot of money-but they can clean this up," she said.